

The Status Report

August 2008 | Volume 4, Issue 8

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The 185th Legislative Session: MCSW Hits & Misses



With the close of the Massachusetts legislature's formal session the MCSW celebrates some important legislative victories and advances on its legislative priorities. We are pleased to share a summary of some of the key legislative items below.

S1172, An Act Establishing the Bristol County Commission on Women. On July 16, Governor Patrick signed into law An Act Establishing the Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women. The legislation creates a permanent commission on the status of women in Bristol County consisting of 9 people, appointed by the MCSW. The Bristol Commission will be charged with conducting an ongoing study of all matters concerning women in Bristol County and advising local and state officials on their findings and recommended solutions.

The MCSW is grateful for the support of the bill's sponsors, Senator Menard and Representative Haddad, as well as advocacy efforts undertaken by women in Bristol County.

S2729, An Act Relative to Equitable Coverage for Annuity Policies. Signed by Governor Patrick on July 31, this legislation requires that state regulated annuity policies sold to residents of Massachusetts must be gender-neutral in all the terms and conditions of the contracts, including premiums and benefits. Previously, annuities sold to women did not provide the same value as those sold to men. A woman either paid a larger premium in order to secure an equitable monthly payment or paying the same premium as a man received a smaller monthly payment. **A diverse coalition of supporters have advocated for some form of this legislation for more than 30 years!**

H617, An Act Establishing the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Commission. Language from H617 was included in the Child Abuse and Neglect legislation, a compromise bill developed after months of negotiation between the House and the Senate. It was passed unanimously by the legislature on July 1 and signed by the Governor shortly thereafter. The legislation aims to protect and provide for the needs of children by improving and coordinating services through the renamed Department of Children and Families. The MCSW is pleased that a grandparent's commission is a component that has been included in these reforms. The commission will assess the challenges and unique needs associated with grandparents raising grandchildren and kinship care providers raising their related children, as well as evaluate the effectiveness of state agencies in assisting grandparents and kinship care providers and advise the state as to how to best assist these unique families.

The Massachusetts Paid Leave Coalition, of which the MCSW is an organizational partner, is to be commended for its efforts throughout the session and in particular in the last days. Unfortunately **S1073, An Act Establishing Paid Sick Days** failed to make it to the Senate for a vote. This bill would have ensured that workers in Massachusetts had the opportunity to earn a minimum of seven days of paid time off annually to take care of their own health needs and those of family members. The MCSW applauds the Coalition's efforts and the support of favorable legislators, and will continue to be committed to this issue.

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Proud Member of the



Executive Director's Corner

"The young women of today, free to study, to speak, to write, to choose their occupation, should remember that every inch of this freedom was bought for them at a great price. It is for them to show their gratitude by helping onward the reforms of their own times, by spreading the light of freedom and of truth still wider. The debt that each generation owes to the past it must pay to the future." - Abigail Scott Duniway, suffrage organizer in the Pacific Northwest

It is fitting that Hilary Clinton, the most successful woman candidate for the presidency of the United States, will address the Democratic Convention on Tuesday, August 26, National Women's Equality Day, which commemorates the 88th anniversary of women getting the right to vote. Her address will bring to the forefront the typically sleepy August remembrance that too often gets lost and goes unnoticed between summer vacations, preparations to go off to college or getting the kids ready to go back to school.

This year's election is of paramount importance to the women of America, too few of whom exercise their hard fought right to vote or appreciate the significant struggles waged over the course of 72 years which created the rights and opportunities that we enjoy today. I'm glad this year the date will get the attention it deserves and will hopefully serve as a springboard to engage more women in the political process and activate them in making women's issues a significant part of the national dialogue and priority setting.

The world's first Woman's Rights Convention was held in Seneca Falls, NY in 1848, the first Woman's Rights Convention of a national scale was held two years later in the city of Worcester, here in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Over 1,000 women and men attended this convention that set up a permanent steering committee which marked the beginning of an organized movement for women's suffrage. The result was a successful and dynamic 72-year political campaign which culminated in the passage of the 19th Amendment.

In Massachusetts, suffragist leaders such as Lucy Stone, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, and Florence Luscomb led the campaign for women's equality. These determined women organized groups promoting women's equality such as the New England Women's Club and the American Woman Suffrage Association, published magazines such as *The Woman's Journal* and *Woman's Era* to promote the cause, made hundreds of speeches, collected petitions, and lobbied legislators.

The 19th Amendment or Susan B. Anthony Amendment, finally narrowly passed Congress in 1919 and was ratified by 36 states in 14 months. It received its last state approval in Tennessee by one vote, that of 25-year-old legislator Harry Burn, who switched from opposition to support after getting a telegram from his mother saying, "Hurrah, and vote for suffrage!" It was certified as part of the U.S. Constitution on August 26, 1920.

We commend the National Organization for Women for choosing to celebrate Women's Equality Day with a petition drive calling on the 2008 presidential candidates to respect women's rights and pay attention to the issues that they care about. Among the demands to be found in this new declaration of sentiments: Passing pay equity legislation to reduce the wage gap; Protecting women's reproductive rights; Ending the recent spate of attacks on Title IX funding, and improving Title IX enforcement; Protecting Social Security, and making it more gender-equitable; Improving health care; Reforming social welfare programs to make them more humane, and to provide greater opportunity for educational advancement; Funding child care assistance programs; Protecting overtime pay; Fully funding and enforcing the Violence Against Women Act of 1994; Reforming immigration policy so that it is less punitive and more fair.

NOW acknowledges its request is a tall order, but the feminist movement has been nothing if not a history of tall orders. The organization strives to make women's equality a reality by ensuring that it is a centerpiece of the 2008 election and is committed to securing commitments from the presidential candidates that they will address issues crucial to women and girls achieving their dreams. You can add your support and join in petitioning these leaders to bring women's voices, concerns and goals to the table in their campaigns and platforms by signing a petition at www.now.org/issues/election/equality-day-petition.html. Together we can and will let candidates from all political parties know that if they want the women's vote—they better speak to all of the issues important to women.

It was the hope of our Foremothers who fought and died for Women's Suffrage that future generations of women would use that hard-won vote to make this a better world and to fight for full equality and justice for women. Let's be sure we all do our part in 2008.



MCSW & CWPPP Collaborate on *Mass Women Matter: Fact Sheet Series*



The MCSW and the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at UMASS-Boston are partnering to contribute to Massachusetts' gender disaggregated data through the development of *Massachusetts Women Matter: A Fact Sheet Series*.

The CWPPP will develop this new initiative that will address the need for frequently updated overviews on the status of women in key sectors in the Commonwealth and on topics that require a gender analysis. While numerous data sources and publications

available through government agencies, academic research centers, and not-for-profit organizations currently provide gender-disaggregated information, there is no regularly updated, standardized series of publications that provides concise and accessible information about women in Massachusetts. As the only women's research center at a public university in the Commonwealth, the Center seeks to address this existing gap and will collaborate with the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women in this endeavor.

Some of the most recent resources on the status of women include the MCSW's 2006 "State of Women: A County by County Report on Women and Girls in Massachusetts", 2004 Real Cuts, Real People, Real Pain: The Effects of the Fiscal Crisis on Women & Girls in Massachusetts and the Institute for Women's Policy Research's 2002 report which covers women's political participation, employment and earnings, social and economic autonomy, reproductive rights, and health. While these resources provide valuable data and analyses, there is a need to establish an ongoing fact sheet series to present information in a consistent, focused, user friendly format.

This type of information on the status of women in Massachusetts is necessary in order to understand the changing needs and concerns of distinct segments of women living in the Commonwealth. Furthermore, it is particularly important to make available information on the essential elements of women's lives and trends in the Commonwealth for effective and equitable public policymaking.

"The MCSW is most appreciative that the CWPPP approached us about this project. The partnership makes sense for our two public institutions and will enable the MCSW to continue contributing to the body of gender-specific data that is available in Massachusetts as well as give us a credible knowledge base to propel our advocacy for positive change for the women of the Commonwealth," said MCSW Executive Director Linda Brantley.

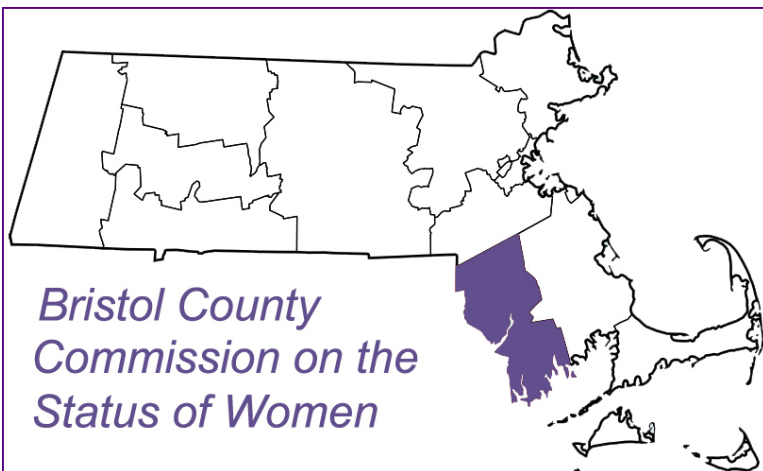
The Center, in conjunction with the MCSW, will produce two fact sheets each year – one fact sheet will address a broad topic/sector and the other will be on a more focused topic. Specifically, the broad topics/sectors will include education, health, politics, justice and the economy; these broad-based fact sheets will be produced at the rate of one per year on a rotating schedule. The second fact sheet will cover a more focused, regional, and/or life course-oriented topic. These more focused topics may include such issues and areas as caregiving, pay equity, corporate leadership, science and technology, violence, female offenders, and/or particular industries. Overall, the series will emphasize differences among women of the Commonwealth whenever appropriate and possible by providing breakdowns based on race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, life course-stage and region. The Center's fact sheet series is being designed to provide essential demographic and other information to the public, policymakers, researchers, advocates and media personnel. Therefore, the fact sheets will be available both in print and electronic form; web-based dissemination of the fact sheets will be searchable by topic and by key demographic variables. The Center plans to launch the fact sheet series at the end of 2008 or the beginning of 2009.

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Looking forward, the MCSW will evaluate its legislative priorities and the challenges that bills which were not passed faced. The Commission is extremely disappointed that pay equity legislation, (S2386/H2826) was unsuccessful, but recognizes the hurdles the bill faced. Commission representatives will work with legislative sponsors and members of Coalition for Women's Wage Equality to strategize for the coming session. In addition, the MCSW, committed to amplifying the voices of women in government, will continue to advocate for the establishment of regional women's commissions. Also of note, the MCSW has identified domestic violence and teen pregnancy as areas of interest and deserving of policy research.

For more information about the following or for a complete listing of the MCSW's endorsed legislation please contact Jill Ashton at jill.ashton@state.ma.us or 617-626-6520. The MCSW encourages advocacy efforts of behalf of its priorities, and would like to thank those who contributed to these successes.

Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women in the Making



The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women is pleased to report that on July 16, Governor Patrick signed into law An Act Establishing the Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women. The need for such an advising body was identified two years ago at the MCSW's Bristol County Regional Council meeting held on April 26, 2006 on the UMass Dartmouth Campus. Since that time the MCSW and local partners in Bristol County have been working diligently to ensure the legislation's success.

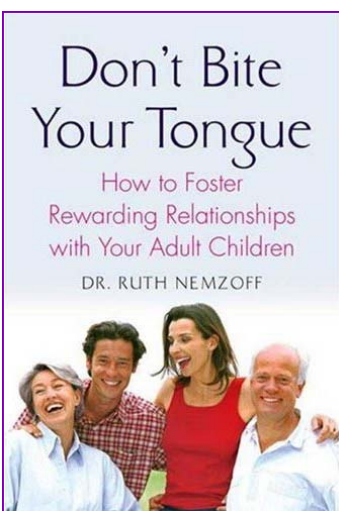
During the Regional Council meeting in 2006, a variety of issues and challenges that women face in Bristol County were discussed, including the lack of a living wage, limited transportation, inadequate child-care options, poor educational options, a housing crisis, the

need for female role models and programming for young girls, and the lack of female representatives in local and municipal government. Ms. Julie Parker noted the need to establish a Bristol County women's commission. MCSW commissioners shared information about the recently established Berkshire County Commission on the Status of Women and offered assistance to the Bristol women should they desire to establish a Bristol County commission.

The legislation was sponsored by Senator Joan Menard of the First Bristol and Plymouth District and Representative Patricia Haddad of the Fifth Bristol District.

The MCSW, named in the legislation as the appointing authority of the BCCSW, is now seeking applicants for the Commissioner positions of the new Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women. The BCCSW will consist of 9 Commissioners, who will serve 3 year terms. Commissioners will be drawn from various parts of the county, varying professions and areas of expertise will reflect the diversity of the county. Applications are available on the MCSW's website, www.mass.gov/women, and by request; the deadline for submission is September 30. For additional information please contact Jill Ashton at jill.ashton@state.ma.us or 617-626-6525.

The MCSW looks forward to the establishment of the Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women and to working with elected officials, women's organizations and other interested parties to ensure its success.



Avid MCSW supporter Dr. Ruth Nemzoff recently published the book "Don't Bite Your Tongue: How To Foster Rewarding Relationships with Your Adult Children". The book counters the popular belief that parents must let go of their adult children and silence themselves. It empowers parents to create close relationships with their adult children, while respecting their independence.

Based on personal stories as well as advice that she has accrued from years of coaching, this lively and readable book shows parents how to communicate at long distances, discuss financial issues without using money as a form of control, speak up when disapproving of an adult child's partner or childrearing practices, handle adult children's career choices or other midlife changes, and navigate an adult child's interreligious, interracial or same sex relationships.

No other book treats the challenges of parent and adult offspring relationships as part and parcel of a healthy family dynamic. This practical guide will help parents play a vital and positive role in their children's lives. The book focuses on the continually lengthening period when both parents and their children are relatively healthy adults. Its self-reflection exercises, film lists, and bibliography can be used alone, in groups, or with adult children. This book, available at Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble and Borders, provides a guide to navigate the ambiguities and ever-changing realities of the lives of parents and their adult children.

Cambridge Commission Releases Report on Status of Local Women & Girls



CAMBRIDGE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women, Cambridge Health Department, and the Institute for Community Health joined efforts to compile a Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Cambridge. The

report, which is the first of its kind for Cambridge, has been a work in progress since 2004 when research began. The primary goals of the report were to empower women and girls by gathering information and making it easily accessible to all so that it would encourage policy efforts. With up-to-date, accurate, and accessible information, this research will serve as a baseline from which progress in the breakdown of barriers to women can be measured.

Martha Farnsworth Riche, former Director of the US Census Bureau, is quoted in the introduction to the document, "Information that is excluded in making societal choices is as important as information that is included. When information is excluded, either deliberately or through indifference, policy choices are skewed at the expense of freedom and justice for all."

According to the status report, the median income for a woman working full time is \$38,000, but the self sufficiency standard (the total annual salary needed in Cambridge for one adult headed household and one preschooler) is more than \$49,000, an \$11,000 dollar difference. According to CCSW Executive Director Kimberly Sansoucy, "The absence of information regarding women has skewed freedom and justice, by highlighting the disparities between the genders this report serves as a guide to mark progress and inspire policy."

The end result of this collaborative effort is a comprehensive and eye-opening look into the status of women in the City of Cambridge. Organized into sections which include demographics, economics, housing, education, health, safety, and older women, the report is user friendly. Research will continue and updates made, the report will be republished every five years so that it may be a constant reliable source of information. Anyone with interest is invited by its authors to utilize their findings to identify and address issues relating to women.

The report can be downloaded at <http://www.icommunityhealth.org/documents/cambridgewomengirls.pdf>. For more information, please contact Kimberly Sansoucy of the Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women at 617-349-4695 or ksansoucy@cambridgema.gov; Marsha Lazar of the Cambridge Public Health Department at 617-546-0274 or mlazar@challiance.org; or Patrice Melvin of the Institute for Community Health at 617-499-6616 or pamelvin@challiance.org.

Now Accepting Applications for New Commissioners

The Commission, which provides a permanent, effective voice for Massachusetts women, is comprised of 19 diverse members who are appointed by the Governor, Senate President, Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Caucus of Women Legislators. The MCSW is now seeking applications to fill five current vacancies.

According to the MCSW's enabling legislation (MA G.L. Chapter 3: Section 66.), "Members of the commission shall be drawn from diverse racial, ethnic, religious, age, sexual orientation and socio-economic backgrounds from throughout the commonwealth and shall have had experience working toward the improvement of the status of women in society." Diverse members of the Commonwealth, as well as those residing in the western, central and south shore regions of the state, are strongly encouraged to apply.

Commissioners serve in a voluntary capacity and are expected to attend 10 monthly full Commission meetings as well as serve on *at least* one of the MCSW's working committees. Commissioners are expected to support the MCSW's efforts towards equality for women throughout the Commonwealth through participation in public hearings and MCSW events in their region as they are available. Individuals with an interest in public policy, statewide outreach and networking, event planning, and public relations will find working on the MCSW's various committees fulfilling.

If you are interested in becoming a Commissioner, please send a letter of interest along with a completed MCSW Commissioner Application (http://www.mass.gov/women/aboutus/mcsw_app.pdf), to Linda Brantley, Executive Director of the Commission. Applications will be shared with the Appointing Authorities who have appointments due.

Take Action. Get Educated. Get Involved.

If you are interested in becoming more involved in the movement to advance women in the Commonwealth you can start by attending any one of the number of events and meetings taking place across the state in the coming weeks.

Saturday, August 9 (9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.): Haitian Roundtable on Domestic Violence

Location: Great Hall (6 Norfolk Street, Dorchester)

Details: The Association of Haitian Women in Boston's Annual Domestic Violence Forum. This year's theme is *Mind, Body, & Soul: Improving the Health and Well-being of Families*. For more information, please contact AFAB at cbonhonmetre@afab-kafanm.org or 617-287-0096.

Tuesday, August 19 (7:30 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.): "Don't Bite Your Tongue" Book Signing

Location: Druker Auditorium, Newton Free Library (330 Homer Street Newton)

Details: Dr. Ruth Nemzoff will be signing copies of her new book "Don't Bite Your Tongue: How to Foster Rewarding Relationships with Your Adult Children". Books will be provided by New England Mobile Book Fair. For more information please contact Ellen Meyers at 617-796-1410 or emeyers@minlib.net.

The Money Conference

A project of State Treasurer Timothy P. Cahill

presented by Treasurer Tim Cahill in conjunction with the YWCA. Financial choices are becoming more complex and without a formal system to develop financial education for the general public, ongoing vigilance is necessary to ensure that this financial education initiative and similar private and public financial educators continue to meet their important objectives. The Money Conferences deliver an array of workshops that offer attendees a path to begin living a financially responsible lifestyle and acquaint attendees with organizations and literature that offer ongoing assistance in reaching financial goals. The Conference will focus on money management, retirement and investment strategies for all ages, racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds, and levels of financial knowledge. **Registration opens on August 18th** at www.themoneyconference.com or call 617-367-6900.

Saturday, September 27 (9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.): Money Conference for Women & Families

Location: Reggie Lewis Athletic Center, Roxbury Community College (1350 Tremont Street, Roxbury Crossing)

Details: The Money Conference is a FREE conference

**Thursday, December 11 (7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.): Massachusetts Conference for Women**

Location: Boston Convention and Exhibition Center

Details: The Massachusetts Conference for Women, hosted in conjunction with the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, is a non-profit, non-partisan, one-day event where Massachusetts women can connect, learn practical and professional strategies from nationally recognized experts, and network with peers. Now in its fourth year, this upcoming Conference promises to be more exciting, more educational and

more inspiring than ever with dynamic speakers and panelists who are eager to share their experiences and opinions with participants of all ages, from all across the state. The Conference will honor inspiring women with our Be the Change Award, and attendees will hear firsthand how the Conference is making a difference in people's lives. Nominate a woman for the Be the Change Award and register for the Conference by visiting www.maconferenceforwomen.org.

Do you have an event you would like to see on this list in an upcoming issue of The Status Report? E-mail the details to Program Coordinator Kim Sebastiao at Kimberly.Sebastiao@state.ma.us and we will do our best to include your event in our next issue.

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Helen Corbett, Middleton
Deborah DiMasi, Boston
Erika Ebbel, Cambridge
Donna Finneran, Mattapan

Marianne Fleckner, Chair, Westford

Catherine Greene, Esq., Secretary, Brighton

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